
The Day of the Lord

The New Testament Texts

Introduction Imagine with me for a moment.

Judgment day – what does a phrase like that mean today?

We have been studying through the book of Joel. In it we have seen the three horizons of the Day of the Lord. This phrase, *Day of the Lord*, refers to the time when God will fully and finally judge the wicked. Through it God's people are delivered. By it, God brings to an end all the evil and suffering that the curse and fallenness have caused.

The New Testament has much to say about the Day of the Lord. As we work through the series on eschatology, on the truths relating to God's plan and purposes for the future, we will be doing more in-depth expositions of most of these texts within their book settings. But this morning, I wanted to take you on a brief, guided tour of these texts. I will be reading a lot of Scripture and the exposition will be more summaries than explanations.

Why do this? Because we can see how important the idea was in the daily life of the New Testament church. The apostles exhorted God's people in many ways in the light of the Day of the Lord. Once we see how they were to profit from understanding the future day of the wrath of God on unbelievers, then we can profit from this truth in the same ways.

The Invitation to Believe before the Day of the Lord

Acts 2:14-41

In the light of the Day of the Lord being near...

An Explanation of the Spirit

(v.14-21)

¹⁴ But Peter, standing with the eleven, lifted up his voice and addressed them: "Men of Judea and all who dwell in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and give ear to my words. ¹⁵ For these people are not drunk, as you suppose, since it is only the third hour of the day. ¹⁶ But this is what was uttered through the prophet Joel:

¹⁷" 'And in the last days it shall be, God declares,
that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh,
and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy,
and your young men shall see visions,
and your old men shall dream dreams;

¹⁸even on my male servants and female servants
in those days I will pour out my Spirit, and they shall prophesy.

¹⁹And I will show wonders in the heavens above
and signs on the earth below,
blood, and fire, and vapor of smoke;

²⁰the sun shall be turned to darkness
and the moon to blood,

before the day of the Lord comes, the great and magnificent day.

²¹And it shall come to pass

that everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.'

Peter explains the giving of the Spirit and the supernatural preaching in a assortment of languages in the light of Joel's prophecy about the Day of the Lord. Before the wrath of God is visited on the wicked, they are called to repent, believe and be saved.

An Exposition of the Messiah

(v.22-36)

²² "Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with mighty works and wonders and signs that God did through him in your midst, as you yourselves know— ²³ this Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men. ²⁴ God raised him up, loosing the pangs of death, because it was not possible for him to be held by it. ²⁵ For David says concerning him,

" 'I saw the Lord always before me,
for he is at my right hand that I may not be shaken;
²⁶therefore my heart was glad, and my tongue rejoiced;
my flesh also will dwell in hope.

²⁷For you will not abandon my soul to Hades,
or let your Holy One see corruption.

²⁸You have made known to me the paths of life;
you will make me full of gladness with your presence.'

²⁹ "Brothers, I may say to you with confidence about the patriarch David that he both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us to this day. ³⁰ Being therefore a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him that he would set one of his descendants on his throne, ³¹ he foresaw and spoke about the resurrection of the Christ, that he was not abandoned to Hades, nor did his flesh see corruption. ³² This Jesus God raised up, and of that we all are wit-

nesses. ³³ Being therefore exalted at the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he has poured out this that you yourselves are seeing and hearing. ³⁴ For David did not ascend into the heavens, but he himself says,

" 'The Lord said to my Lord,
Sit at my right hand,
³⁵until I make your enemies your footstool.'

³⁶ Let all the house of Israel therefore know for certain that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified."

Turning to the Psalms, Peter brings Christ and His redeeming work to the center. Jesus has been raised from the dead and is seated in the heavens on the throne of David. Christ centered preaching that calls people to believe and be delivered from the wrath of God on judgment day highlights the cross and the crown.

An Exhortation to Repent (v.37-41)

³⁷ Now when they heard this they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Brothers, what shall we do?" ³⁸ And Peter said to them, "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. ³⁹ For the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself." ⁴⁰ And with many other words he bore witness and continued to exhort them, saying, "Save yourselves from this crooked generation." ⁴¹ So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls.

The power of God moves through the preaching of the Word and the men and women are convicted of sin and judgment. They inquire as to what they must do in the light of the gospel to be saved. Peter's exhortation to repent is responded to by saving belief and public baptism.

So, in the light of the Day of the Lord, turn from your sins, believe in the Lord Jesus as your Savior, bow to Him as your Lord and Master and be saved. Then, you will be sheltered and safe on the dreadful day of the judgment of the wicked.

The Mercy in Discipline because of the Day of the Lord 1 Corinthians 5:3-13

In the light of being saved at the Day of the Lord...

Discipline because of His Soul's Danger (v.3-5)

³ For though absent in body, I am present in spirit; and as if present, I have already pronounced judgment on the one who did such a thing. ⁴ When you are assembled in the name of the Lord Jesus and my spirit is present, with the power of our Lord Jesus, ⁵ you are to deliver this man to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, so that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord.

Professing Christians who are unrepentant over their sin may not be Christians. This is a great danger: that we will be deceived over the state of our soul and thus will be among the judged on the Day of the Lord. So, we must lovingly carry out corrective and restorative discipline as a means to bring about repentance and to bring the gospel to bear directly on the person.

Discipline because of Christ's Sacrifice (v.6-8)

⁶ Your boasting is not good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump? ⁷ Cleanse out the old leaven that you may be a new lump, as you really are unleavened. For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed. ⁸ Let us therefore celebrate the festival, not with the old leaven, the leaven of malice and evil, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.

In the light of the Day of the Lord, we must recognize the tendency in our own hearts to sin, particularly to anger and malice, in the midst of difficult times of corrective discipline. The old leaven here is not referring just to the sinning person, but to the church who are to be careful attention to one's own soul. Then, as the church gathers at the table, those gathered have sincere and true hearts unleavened by evil attitudes and actions towards others.

Discipline because of the Church's Separation (v.9-13)

⁹ I wrote to you in my letter not to associate with sexually immoral people— ¹⁰ not at all meaning the sexually immoral of this world, or the greedy and swindlers, or idolaters, since then you would need to go out of the world. ¹¹ But now I am writing to you not to associate with anyone who bears the name of brother if he is guilty of sexual immorality or greed, or is an idolater, reviler, drunkard, or swindler—not even to eat with such a one. ¹² For what have I to do with judging outsiders? Is it not those inside the church whom you are to judge? ¹³ God judges those outside. "Purge the evil person from among you."

Finally, we must be clear about our interaction with those who profess to be believers but live wicked, sinful lives. We are not to associate with them. In this context, it is with the man whose discipline had been stalled due to sinful pride, boasting and tolerance. There is an application that may be wider than just that – we must be discerning about those whose profession of faith and practice of life do not match.

In the light of the Day of the Lord, we must be faithful in dealing with those who call themselves Christians but live wicked lives. We must remove them when necessary in hopes that they will be saved. And we must not associate with sinning, but professing, Christians in hopes that they will repent and God's people be holy.

The Call to Diligence

because of the Day of the Lord 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11

In the light of the sudden and unexpected arrival of the Day of the Lord...

Be Diligent because of their Destruction (v.1-4)

Now concerning the times and the seasons, brothers, you have no need to have anything written to you. ² For you yourselves are fully aware that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. ³ While people are saying, "There is peace and security," then sudden destruction will come upon them as labor pains come upon a pregnant woman, and they will not escape. ⁴ But you are not in darkness, brothers, for that day to surprise you like a thief.

Unlike unbelievers for whom the judgment of the Day of the Lord will come as a great surprise, we are to be knowledgeable and diligent concerning it. We must read our Bibles carefully and be discerning of our times so that we are prepared in our souls for the birth pangs that will affect us as that day comes.

Be Diligent because of Your Life (v.5-8)

⁵ For you are all children of light, children of the day. We are not of the night or of the darkness. ⁶ So then let us not sleep, as others do, but let us keep awake and be sober. ⁷ For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk, are drunk at night. ⁸ But since we belong to the day, let us be sober, having put on the breastplate of faith and love, and for a helmet the hope of salvation.

Sin, carnal living and self-indulgence all dull our soul's senses so that we are not alert to the realities the Bible teaches us about. So there is a kind of dullness that comes through ignorance. But there is a more dangerous dullness and drowsiness and darkness that comes to believers. It comes when we do not live as people who are in the light, but in the darkness. May God grant you to live according to the light of God's truth, grace and holiness.

Be Diligent because of Your Salvation (v.9-11)

⁹ For God has not destined us for wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, ¹⁰ who died for us so that whether we are awake or asleep we might live with him. ¹¹ Therefore encourage one another and build one another up, just as you are doing.

Why are we to be diligent? Because in our salvation we have been delivered from the wrath of God. Therefore, we have been delivered from the Day of the Lord and the judgment of the wicked. It is our destiny, as the chosen people of God, to obtain the salvation Jesus has purchased for us. Since this is so, then we must exhort and encourage one another as the darkness rises until the day of Jesus' return.

The Truth that Reassures because of the Day of the Lord 2 Thessalonians 2:1-12

In the light of the decisive judgment on the Day of the Lord...

Hold Fast to the Biblical Truth (v.1-2)

Now concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered together to him, we ask you, brothers, ² not to be quickly shaken in mind or alarmed, either by a spirit or a spoken word, or a letter seeming to be from us, to the effect that the day of the Lord has come.

Is understanding what the Bible teaches about Jesus' coming important? Yes because confusion and mis-teaching raises false expectations or alarms. Like the church at Thessalonica, we must hold on carefully to what the Bible teaches.

Discern the Order of Things (v.3-6)

³ Let no one deceive you in any way. For that day will not come, unless the rebellion comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction, ⁴ who opposes and exalts himself against every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, proclaiming himself to be God. ⁵ Do you not remember that when I was still with you I told you these things? ⁶ And you know what is restraining him now so that he may be revealed in his time.

Now, here is where there is much confusion. Clearly, in this paragraph, Paul calls on the church to understand that before Christ comes and we are gathered to Him, the person called in the Bible, the anti-Christ, will make his ascendancy. In other words, Christians can know for certain the Day of the Lord has not come because these events must come first. Our being caught up to Jesus (sometimes called the Rapture) is between these events and the Day of the Lord. Christians will be around to see the rebellion, the man of lawlessness arise and the public self-deification. Then Jesus will come, we will be caught up to Him and then the Day of the Lord will begin.⁵

Understand the Progression of Lawlessness (v.7-10)

⁷ For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work. Only he who now restrains it will do so until he is out of the way. ⁸ And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord Jesus will kill with the breath of his mouth and bring to nothing by the appearance of his coming. ⁹ The coming of the lawless one is by the activity of Satan with all power and false signs and wonders, ¹⁰ and with all wicked deception for those who are perishing, because they refused to love the truth and so be saved.

During the time from the outpouring of the Spirit of God at Pentecost till the Day of the Lord, there is a slow and long working of Satan that will culminate in the rise of the lawless one. Increasingly Satan will deceive people through miracles, signs and wonders. The effect is that unbelievers are deceived and damned.

Be Grippled by the Condemnation of the Wicked (v.11-12)

¹¹ Therefore God sends them a strong delusion, so that they may believe what is false, ¹² in order that all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness.

But Satan is not in control. During these long two centuries God has allowed that deception. Because people loved their sin and pleasure, God will, in the last days,

send a strong delusion so that they cannot see what is obvious and will not be saved.

Give Thanks for the Greatness of Salvation (v.13-15)

¹³ But we ought always to give thanks to God for you, brothers beloved by the Lord, because God chose you as the firstfruits to be saved, through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth. ¹⁴ To this he called you through our gospel, so that you may obtain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. ¹⁵ So then, brothers, stand firm and hold to the traditions that you were taught by us, either by our spoken word or by our letter.

What a word here for us. We must give thanks for the grace of God and the greatness of our salvation. God has chosen His people to be saved and will call them to be saved through the gospel. We are not ultimately vulnerable to the damning deceits nor delusions. But we must hold fast to the Bible.

Pray for Mutual Comfort and Stability (v.16-17)

¹⁶ Now may our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God our Father, who loved us and gave us eternal comfort and good hope through grace, ¹⁷ comfort your hearts and establish them in every good work and word.

In the light of the Day of the Lord, the assurances of God's Word, our need for diligence and discernment, pray for one another. Pray that God will give us all we need through grace so that our hearts, our whole inner persons will be at rest and at work.

The Motivation to Holiness

because of the Day of the Lord

2 Peter 3:1-13

In the light of the total destruction of the old creation at the Day of the Lord...

Consider Carefully What the Scriptures Teach (v.1-7)

This is now the second letter that I am writing to you, beloved. In both of them I am stirring up your sincere mind by way of reminder, ² that you should remember the predictions of the holy prophets and the commandment of the Lord and Savior through your apostles, ³ knowing this first of all, that scoffers will come in the last days with scoffing, following their own sinful desires. ⁴ They will say, "Where is the promise of his coming? For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all things are continuing as they were from the beginning of creation." ⁵ For they deliberately overlook this fact, that the heavens existed long ago, and the earth was formed out of water and through water by the word of God, ⁶ and that by means of these the world that then existed was deluged with water and perished. ⁷ But by the same word the heavens and earth that now exist are stored up for fire, being kept until the day of judgment and destruction of the ungodly.

Scoffers will come who will mock the possibility of future judgment. They believe that nothing has changed since the beginning. They are ignorant of the Genesis account of the worldwide flood through which God saved Noah in the ark.

Biblical History is important for it tells us how God has judged in the past. A Biblical interpretation of history will answer many false philosophies and ideas. Peter is clearly understanding the Genesis account as being a world-wide, universal destruction of mankind.

Since we know that God judged the whole world in Noah's flood as recorded in the book of Genesis, we then know that universal future judgment is sure.

Wait Patiently for God's Promises (v.8-10)

⁸ But do not overlook this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. ⁹ The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance. ¹⁰ But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a roar, and the heavenly bodies will be burned up and dissolved, and the earth and the works that are done on it will be exposed.

God is saving his people until the Day of the Lord. The fact that judgment has not yet come is evidence that God is not concerned about time the way we are. It is also a demonstration of the patience of God toward His people, who has willed that none of us, His people, are lost, but that all come to repentance.

God will destroy the old order at the Day of the Lord. Just as the world that existed before the flood was destroyed by the flood waters and a new earth emerged, so the present solar system (sic...) and all its works will be destroyed by fire. Out of it will emerge the fulfillment and the fullness of the new creation.

Live Righteously until the New Creation (v.11-13)

¹¹ Since all these things are thus to be dissolved, what sort of people ought you to be in lives of holiness and godliness, ¹² waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be set on fire and dissolved, and the heavenly bodies will melt as they burn! ¹³ But according to his promise we are waiting for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.

Here is the main aim of all teaching about the Day of the Lord and last things: that we might be a holy people in every aspect of our lives. Yes, we want to learn the truths and the principles that are involved. But we are not just accumulating interesting and fascinating information. We are learning for living.

Reflect and Respond

So, how does the truth of the Day of the Lord affect us?

In the light of the coming judgment of God, believe the good news of salvation through Jesus Christ. Repent of your sins, bow to Jesus as Lord and publicly profess your faith through baptism.

In the light of the coming judgment of God, recognize the mercy and call to repent that is integral to all true, loving Biblical discipline.

In the light of the coming judgment of God, be careful over your own life in holiness and live in the light of God and His Word.

In the light of the coming judgment of God, be discerning as to how the Bible interprets the past and the future, holding fast to its truths so as to remain stable and steadfast.

In the light of the coming judgment of God, be gripped by God's saving grace to you that has chosen you, called you, saved you, sheltered you and will eventually bring you safely home to God in His glory.

In the light of the coming judgment of God, be patient and diligent to walk humbly and holy before God. Know that when God has saved the last of His people, then and only then will Day of the Lord come. Till then, wait, long and hope for the new heavens and new earth wherein righteousness dwells.

End Notes

⁵ I plan to have some charts that will help visualize this when we do the exposition of 1 and 2 Thessalonians. Clearly I am not teaching that Christians will be raptured before Daniel's 70 week (sometimes and incorrectly called the Tribulation). We will be caught up to the Lord sometime between the Anti-Christ proclaiming himself to be god and the Day of the Lord. I believe and teach that we will be caught up to Jesus when He returns immediately before the period of the outpouring of His wrath and the final judgment on the Day of the Lord.